

Due to a recent [change in international travel law](#) , the demand for U.S. passports and other travel documents has dramatically increased in the past several months. Beginning January 23, 2007, all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will now be required to present a valid passport, [Air NEXUS](#) card, or U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document, or an Alien Registration Card, Form I-551.

If you are currently applying or will be applying for a U.S. passport, please be advised that the current estimated processing time is twelve to fourteen weeks for regular applications, and eight to ten weeks for expedited applications. If you are scheduled to travel within two weeks and you have applied for a passport at least eight weeks in advance of your departure date, my office may be able to assist you in contacting the [San Francisco \(SF\) Passport Agency](#) .

You may check the status of your passport on-line at www.travel.state.gov or via e-mail to npi.c@state.gov

. If this is an emergency, you may also call the SF Passport Agency directly at (415) 538-2700, or the national public number at (877) 487-2778. The Passport Service reports that the best time to call is between 6:00 AM and 9:00 AM Pacific Time. Hold times for both numbers are very long.

Please also note that, as early as January 1, 2008, all persons traveling between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda by land or sea (including ferries), may also be required to present a valid passport or other travel documents as determined by the Department of Homeland Security. If you intend to travel internationally in 2008 and do not currently have a valid passport or other acceptable travel documents, you may choose to apply for these documents several months in advance to accommodate potential delays in processing. The Department of State website has more information about [applying for a U.S. passport](#) .

Travel Resources Abroad

- For travel information by country, including entry/exit requirements, safety information, updates on current events, you may access [country-specific fact sheets](#) on the Department of State website. Prior to your departure, check the fact sheets for any advisories

that may affect your travel plans or preparation.

- It is also advisable to register at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the foreign country you are visiting in order to make your presence known, in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. Although voluntary, registration is particularly important for those who plan to stay in a country longer than one month, or who will travel to:

- A country that is experiencing civil unrest, has an unstable political climate, or is undergoing a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a hurricane.

- A country where there are no U.S. officials. In such cases, you should register at the U.S. embassy or consulate in an adjacent country, leave an itinerary with the Consular Section, ask about conditions in the country that you will visit and ask about the third country that may represent U.S. interests there.

- You may also [register in advance on-line](#) by visiting the Department of State website.

- U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad also provide a wide variety of resources for U.S. citizen travelers:

- If you are ill or injured, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a list of local medical facilities. At your request, consular officers are also available to help you contact family or friends.

- Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a consular officer immediately. Although consular officers cannot serve as attorneys, they will visit you, advise you of your rights under local laws, provide a list of local attorneys who speak English, and ensure that you are held under humane conditions and are treated fairly under local law.

- Consular officers are also available to assist you in replacing stolen passports, contacting family, friends, or employers, address emergency needs that arise as a result of crime, and obtain information about local resources to assist victims of local crime.

Additional information for travelers is available on the [Department of State's website](#) . For additional questions or assistance, you may also contact my district office by phone at (408) 558-8085 or by fax at (408) 558-8086.